

GOALS AT A GLANCE

The Great Lakes Border Health Initiative's goals are always evolving, through group consensus and collaborative exploration. Current objectives include:

- To IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES to improve collaborative early warning infectious disease surveillance sharing among the U.S. states of Michigan, Minnesota, New York and Wisconsin and the province of Ontario.
- To REACH AN AGREEMENT regarding the type of infectious disease information to be shared, and the manner in which it will be shared, which will include developing and agreeing upon a 24/7 response protocol among our jurisdictions that would include appropriate contacts and their roles for all jurisdictions.

INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION is critical when dealing with the threat of cross-border health incidents. The following examples required international response and coordination of services.

- **Shigellosis** outbreak associated with commercial airline travel from Hawaii (8/2004)
- **Cryptosporidiosis** outbreak – NY state water park (8/2005)
- **Salmonellosis** outbreak – Mother's Day brunch at Ontario botanical gardens (5/2005)
- **Rubella** outbreak – among unimmunized persons, Ontario (5/2005)

Learn more about the GREAT LAKES BORDER HEALTH INITIATIVE:

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early warning infectious
disease surveillance efforts.

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Improving early
warning
infectious
disease
surveillance at
international
borders

GREAT LAKES BORDER HEALTH INITIATIVE



**Addressing
international border
health issues through:**

- **COLLABORATION**
- **SURVEILLANCE**
- **SHARING DATA**
- **COMMUNICATION**

"Timely global alerts worked well to raise awareness and vigilance to levels that can prevent imported cases of an emerging and transmissible infection from causing significant outbreaks."

**WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
World Health Report
ON "THE IMPACT OF SARS"**

WHAT IS THE GREAT LAKES BORDER HEALTH INITIATIVE?

With the world's mobile population, no nation can view itself as an island inside geopolitical boundaries.

For cities and states that border other countries, this is even more true.

WHAT IS THE GREAT LAKES BORDER HEALTH INITIATIVE?

THE GREAT LAKES BORDER HEALTH INITIATIVE (GLBHI) is a project funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to *improve early warning infectious disease surveillance at international borders*.

Although the GLBHI is funded at the federal level, and leadership for the program is provided at the state and provincial level, local participation is vital to the initiative's progress and found in most every subcommittee.

WHO IS INVOLVED?

THE GREAT LAKES BORDER HEALTH INITIATIVE was originally undertaken as the *Michigan-Ontario Border Health Initiative* in early 2004. The program expanded in the fall of 2004 to include Minnesota, New York and Wisconsin, with partners representing tribal, local, state/provincial and federal governments. Public health workers, laboratorians, infection control professionals, emergency management and planning personnel, legal experts, communication specialists, and tribal health leaders work together to advance the work of the initiative.

WHY IS THE WORK BEING UNDERTAKEN?

Pathogens do not recognize or respect geopolitical boundaries. International travelers can spread a contagious disease quickly from country to country. Infectious disease outbreaks can be naturally occurring such as SARS, or intentional acts of bioterrorism.

By collaborating in advance of an outbreak or event, neighboring jurisdictions will be able to respond to an infectious disease outbreak in the most efficient and effective manner.

- It is essential for states, provinces, and tribes along the United States/ Canada border to be able to:
- *detect an infectious disease outbreak as early as possible;*
 - *quickly communicate with one another and formulate the appropriate response to control the outbreak, and*
 - *coordinate and carry out the response.*



HOW IS THE WORK BEING DONE?

The GLBHI operates through a steering committee with representatives from Ontario and each participating state. Subcommittees work on issues that must be addressed to develop a system for effective response to cross-border infectious disease outbreaks. Subcommittees are:

DIRECT CARE
EMERGENCY RESPONSE
LABORATORY
LEGAL
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMUNICATIONS

The GLBHI also holds an annual gathering of international public health stakeholders, for the exchange of information and updates related to the initiative. The face-to-face meeting provides an additional opportunity to strengthen alliances between our partners and international neighbors.

Differences in healthcare systems, government structures, cultural nuances and public health priorities all impact the coordination of streamlined international crisis response. Together, the Great Lakes Border Health Initiative partners are committed to converting challenges into opportunities in this groundbreaking effort to strengthen international public health collaboration.

The GREAT LAKES BORDER HEALTH INITIATIVE's proactive efforts in early warning infectious disease surveillance will ensure quicker, more streamlined response on both sides of the border. Among the issues being discussed:

- Exploring collaboration in emergency response with public health, health care and other partners using the *Incident Management System*.
- Identifying issues and exploring opportunities to improve the system for cross-border travel of healthcare workers in the event of border delays or closures.
- Exploring the development and sharing of templates and guidance for health care practices across jurisdictions.
- Determining criteria that would trigger cross border notification and data sharing during an infectious disease outbreak, and establishing the best methods for sharing that data.
- Sharing of data and laboratory results.
- Overcoming legal challenges in public health preparedness and response among multiple jurisdictions with differing statutory, regulatory, and judicial systems.